

## BETTER UNDERSTANDING INFRASTRUCTURE IS ONE GOAL OF PLANT TOUR

By Michael Woodward, Reporter Anderson Valley Post

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**FINISHED PRODUCT:** Wood chips, a by-product of milling lumber, provides fuel for a steam-powered electrical generator at Sierra Pacific Industries Inc. At right, Jim Branham of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy tours the Anderson mill.

While the state of California prioritized biomass power plants as a renewable energy source, the job of making it profitable will be a major hurdle, warned experts at Sierra Pacific Industries, Inc at a meeting March 4 with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. With 100 of the state's 600 megawatts of biomass-fueled power coming from SPI plants statewide, spokesman Bob Mertz described to the conservancy what was the limiting factor to making biomass plants profitable: transportation costs of wood waste to the power plant.

Bringing wood waste from the forest to a power plant is expensive, but SPI can do it because the wood waste arrives with the valued product, timber, Mertz said.

"The combination of putting one (a cogeneration plant) next to a saw mill works well," said Mark Pawlicki, director of corporate affairs and sustainability.

The cogeneration plant in Anderson can produce 5 megawatts, and the wood waste fuel is provided by the sawdust and chips from the sawmill. In turn, the steam exhaust from the cogeneration plant is used to power the kiln that dries the finished lumber.

As mills throughout the Sierra Nevadas close, infrastructure for a profitable relationship that enables biomass power becomes more and more endangered, said Jim Branham, SNC executive officer.

The conservancy met with SPI officials to better understand the infrastructure of a successful biomass operation and consider the impediments to its success, Branham said, adding that the conservancy will also review other types of operations that create a profitable partnership with a cogeneration plant.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy seeks to "explore ways to prevent catastrophic wildfire while achieving ecologically healthy forests and vibrant local economies," according to a press release.

Environmental studies are still being conducted for SPI's planned 23 megawatt cogeneration plant on its Anderson campus, Pawlicki said, adding that the project, if approved by county officials, was still two years from completion.